

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### EASTERN TIMBER WOLF PROPOSED FOR THREATENED LIST IN MINNESOTA

The eastern timber wolf of Minnesota, a subspecies of the gray wolf, is being proposed for reclassification from the endangered species category to that of a threatened species. This move reflects the increase in numbers, extension of the animal's range in northern Minnesota, and the fact that it is no longer in danger of extinction in that part of its range.

This proposal, to be published in the June 8, 1977, Federal Register, invites public comment through August 8, 1977. Comments should be addressed to Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

"Endangered" means that a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened" means that a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a portion of its range.

Numerous attacks on domestic animals have been reported recently in Minnesota as the wolf has extended its range. The reclassification to threatened will allow a limited killing of wolves, when necessary, by authorized State or Federal agents according to the proposal. The wolf population in Minnesota is estimated at about 1,200.

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In other States in the "lower 48" outside of Minnesota the gray wolf would continue to be listed as endangered. In Alaska this species is not listed because its population is numerous and healthy in the wild, numbering an estimated 10,000.

Depredating wolves in Minnesota are presently dealt with by live trapping and relocating the culprits. Detailed studies of the relocated animals, however, indicate that once removed from its own territory and relocated onto another wolf pack's turf, the lone newcomer may be subjected to fatal attacks by the resident pack.

The proposal establishes five zones in Minnesota for wolf management, with the first three zones consisting of 9,800 square miles in the north-east proposed as critical habitat. The wolf will be afforded a sanctuary where no killing may occur in its prime range in the 4,412 square miles of zone 1. In the other zones, wolves may be killed if they commit significant depredations on lawfully present domestic animals. Killing may only be done by authorized Federal or State employees.

The wolf in Minnesota has been a subject of controversy for the last several years because of its increase in numbers and extension of range to settled areas. On October 4, 1974, the State petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to exclude the wolf from the endangered category.

In response, the Service initiated a review on November 21, 1974. Further actions were withheld until the Recovery Team formulated its plan for the animal. In late 1976 the Recovery Team—composed of State, Federal, and academic wolf specialists—recommended reclassification and management.

This present proposal is based largely on the Recovery Team's recommendations.